

Communications and 20.109



Oral Communications

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Written Communications

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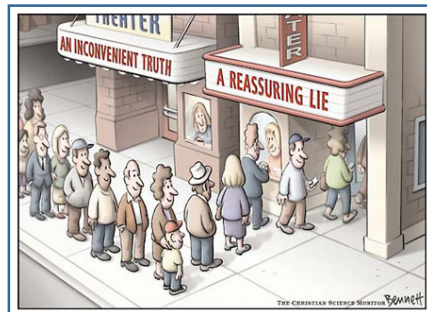
*Course communications coordinator and original developer of this presentation

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Getting to know you -- Part 1

Two truths and a lie

- ☐ Write three statements about yourself, two of them true and one a lie.



2

Getting to know you -- Part 2

Letter to Atissa, Neal, and Linda

- ☐ What have been your experiences with scientific writing (e.g., lab reports, research articles, reviews)? With other forms of writing?
 - ☐ What have been your experiences with oral presentations (whether scientific or not)?
 - ☐ How would you describe yourself as a writer? As a public speaker?
 - ☐ What are your writing/speaking goals for 20.109?
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3

What were the steps in the writing process for a recent academic project?

1.

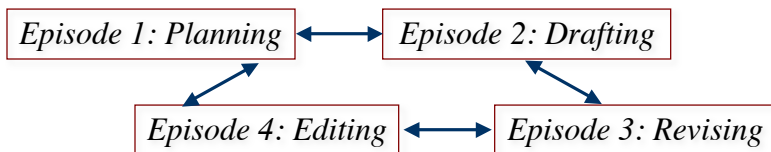
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Modeling the process for trouble spots



A Writer's Questions

What do I know about my topic?
Why am I writing?
Who are my readers?
What do they know already about my topic?
How is this task like others I have done?
What structure works best for my topic?



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Good writers and composing strategies



Independence Key

1. **Declarative Knowledge:** Knowing what strategies are available
2. **Procedural Knowledge:** Knowing how to use a strategy.
3. **Conditional Knowledge:** Knowing how and when to use a strategy.

*The goal is to develop all three types of knowledge
for each part of the writing process.*

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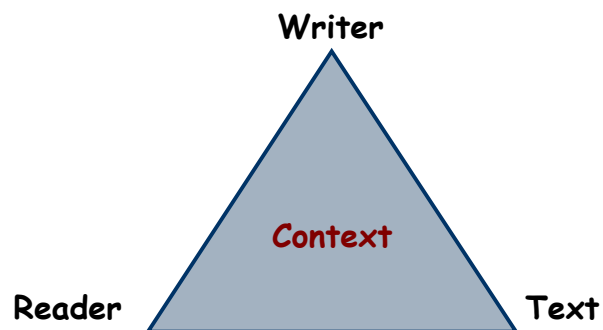
Controlling the rhetoric of scientific writing



... “the art of finding in any given case the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle).

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Writing and the rhetorical triangle

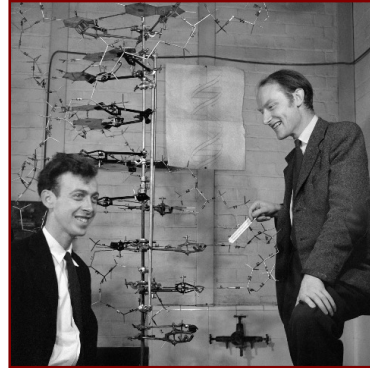


Writers balance the relationship among themselves, the texts, their readers, and the context in which this balancing act occurs.

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Courting the audience

“The April 1953 paper, then, is really just the initial move in a rhetorical strategy aimed at gaining and holding the attention of an audience. As such, it presumes an understanding of *science as a human community* in which neither facts nor ideas speak for themselves, and the attention of the audience must be courted.”*



*Michael Halloran on Watson & Crick's 1953 "The Structure of DNA"

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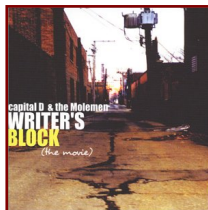
Reality may complicate the triangle

Multiple purposes

- Explain
- Entertain
- Persuade
- Get an A

Multiple audiences

- Yourself
- Imagined reader
- Peers
- Instructors



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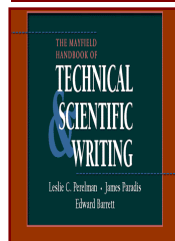
Language enables writing and research



"Language, oral or written, is an expressive instrument through which we communicate what we have previously thought [or discovered]. It is also the reflective instrument through which we think, alone or with others, about what we are doing" (Paul Connolly).

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Good MIT resources



The Mayfield Guide On-Line

<http://www.mhhe.com/mayfieldpub/tsw/home.htm>

MIT Writing and Communication Center

Room 12-132; 617/253-3090

Appointments can be made from

<http://web.mit.edu/writing/>

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Writing resources on the 20.109 Wiki

<http://openwetware.org/wiki/20.109%28S10%29>